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New controls over waterfront

David Crombie will head a provincial inquiry on how to protect the Lake Ontario waterfront from Burlington to Newcastle, Ontario Premier David Peterson has announced.

Peterson made the announcement yesterday at a news conference in which he declared a provincial interest in the waterfront lands east of Yonge St. over to Ashbridge's Bay, including the port industrial lands.

Peterson's declaration means that any request for new buildings must be okayed by the province.

Crombie, who is heading a federal royal commission on the future of the Toronto waterfront, is expected to report on the future of the lands east of Yonge next September.

Peterson said he wants the waterfront "preserved as a public resource and not as a private resort."

"In short," the Premier said, "not a single structure, not an office building, not a condominium, not even a toolshed will be constructed without provincial agreement."

The province endorsed the interim report of the royal commission into the waterfront by Crombie. It is also undertaking an environmental evaluation of lands owned by the Toronto Harbor Commission and adjacent lands in the area of Yonge St. and Ashbridge's Bay, as recommended in Crombie's report.

Crombie, a former federal cabinet minister and mayor of Toronto, welcomed his new mandate, which is tantamount to the province giving him similar powers and responsibilities as he possesses federally.

He told reporters he is looking for a co-operative approach to handling Toronto's waterfront.

Housing and Municipal Affairs Minister John Sweeney told reporters at the news conference yesterday that the province is concentrating on the lands east of Yonge St. because it didn't want to dilute its efforts by setting too wide a target.

All buildings need approval from province, Peterson says

ing Metro-area river valleys with the waterfront.

In addition, Liberal MPP Ron Kanter (St. Andrew-St. Patrick) will study ways of protecting river valleys that stretch from Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges moraine north of Metro.

Sweeney said the province isn't talking about an absolute freeze on development in the area east of Yonge St.

But he said he "can't imagine any circumstances" under which the province would allow new projects unless there was an urgent public need.

"I think the chance of anything happening in the next 12 months is almost nil," he said.

There is a desperate need for housing, but that doesn't mean Sweeney would support a highrise housing project on land east of Yonge, a spokesman for the minister said.



BIG JOB: Ontario Premier David Peterson, left, talks with David Crombie after announcing Crombie will head a probe on protecting the waterfront "as a public resource."

Councillors call controls undemocratic

New provincial controls on Toronto's waterfront are "arbitrary and unilateral actions" that threaten to "stamp out democracy," a Toronto City Council committee has been told.

Council's waterfront committee yesterday asked for an emergency city council meeting tomorrow to talk about the controls announced by Premier David Peterson.

Some councillors said it was a ploy by the province to safeguard land it wants to use for an Olympic village if Toronto gets the 1996 Games.

Angry councillor



wants Olympic housing on the port lands."

Layton said he'll vote against the city's bid to stage the 1996 Summer Olympic Games unless Peterson sends city council a letter saying he's not pushing an Olympic village on the port lands.

Several councillors said they think the province is stepping in to the waterfront to ensure that the lands in question are developed the way it wants, not the way the city wants.

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Sweeney said the port area should be used for not only industry, but for housing, commercial projects, open space and recreation.

He also pledged support for Crombie's call for no additional highrises on the lands west of Yonge St. But he refused to promise that no new highrises would be built.

As well as taking a role in waterfront planning, the province yesterday said it's asking Ottawa to review 16 potential developments west of Yonge St. in the city's Harbourfront region.

The major buildings that need to be reviewed are three proposed condominium projects south of Queen's Quay, Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton said. But he said it could cost tens of millions of dollars to scrap the buildings.

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Ontario to the Oak Ridges moraine north of Metro.

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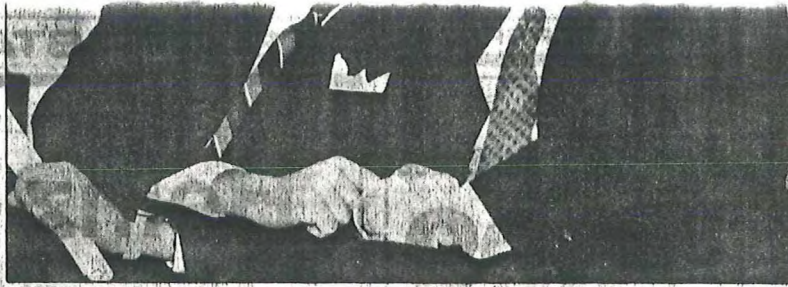
Angry councillor

Peterson yesterday imposed a virtual freeze on any new development on Toronto's waterfront that doesn't meet public needs. He did so by declaring a provincial interest in the waterfront lands east of Yonge St. over to Ashbridge's Bay, including the port industrial lands.

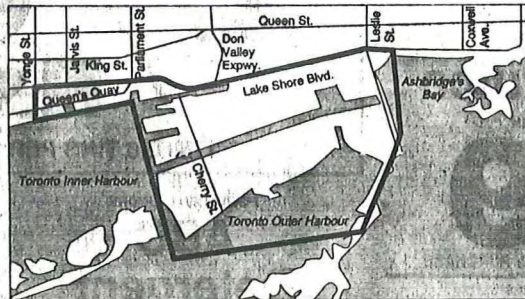
In addition, David Crombie, who is heading a federal royal commission on the future of the Toronto waterfront, will head a provincial inquiry on how to protect the Lake Ontario waterfront from Burlington to Newcastle.

"I'm sure Mr. Crombie's heart is in the right place, but there's a question of accountability here," an angry Toronto Councillor Tom Jakobek told the city waterfront committee after Peterson's news conference.

"My parents came to this country seeking democratic freedoms, and I never thought I'd see the day in this city where arbitrary and



BIG JOB: Ontario Premier David Peterson, left, talks with David Crombie after announcing Crombie will head a probe on protecting the waterfront "as a public resource."



unilateral actions are taken that stamp out democracy, where we would allow a non-elected person to be dictator of the waterfront."

In reaction to a call by Crombie for a co-operative approach on the waterfront, Jakobek said people are being misled.

"The City of Toronto has absolutely no authority left on its waterfront," he complained.

Development industry

Councillor Jack Layton said he's not sure that a provincial government that's so closely tied to the development industry is going to be able to save the city's waterfront.

Metro Councillor Dale Martin (Downtown) said: "By and large the province signing on is a good thing. But I'm bothered that there was no declaration of provincial interest in Etobicoke and the other waterfronts."

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Layton said he'll vote against the city's bid to stage the 1996 Summer Olympic Games unless Peterson sends city council a letter saying he's not pushing an Olympic village on the port lands.

Several councillors said they think the province is stepping in to the waterfront to ensure that the lands in question are developed the way it wants, not the way the city wants.

But Toronto Mayor Art Eggleton, who pushed for Olympic housing on the port lands, said he welcomes the new provincial measures.

"I think the only way to make things happen is if we all work together in a co-operative fashion," he told the committee.

Major landowner

The province should be involved because it's both a major landowner in the area and it would help pay for new services in the region, such as transportation, sewers and housing, Eggleton said.

City and Metro councils have previously refused to get involved in the Crombie commission's work. But both Eggleton and Metro Chairman Alan Tonks said they hope that will change.

New Democratic Party environmental critic Ruth Grier (Etobicoke-Lakeshore) said she's taking a wait-and-see approach to the province's announcement.

Ontario plans to protect lakefront, but for whom?

THE PROVINCE'S interference in planning along Toronto's eastern waterfront is starting to look a lot like a childish but dangerous game: Just when everyone thought Premier David Peterson had taken his marbles and gone home, he's come back for the ultimate revenge.

Last week, Peterson and Municipal Affairs Minister John Sweeney announced major new provincial controls on all waterfront development from Yonge St. east to Ashbridge's Bay. In future, not even a tool shed will be built on those easterly lands without provincial consent, says Peterson.

The controls are ostensibly to protect Toronto's waterfront "as an accessible and attractive place for people."

Yet they don't apply to areas along Metro's waterfront where that access is now most threatened. They don't stop the continued overdevelopment of Harbourfront or the proposed luxury high-rises planned for Etobicoke's waterfront area, which some are calling "Harbourfront II."

Those two areas will simply be part of an over-all provincial review, to be headed by former Toronto mayor David Crombie.

Why isn't the province stepping in there, too? Well, the reason may be all too simple.

For some 10 years, Toronto politicians have been debating the future of the waterfront industrial lands east of Yonge St., commonly called the east Bayfront and Port of Toronto area. They've been looking for a way to protect about 2,000 industrial jobs at places like Redpath Sugar, Victory Soya Mills and older companies along Commissioners St. while also providing



new land for much-needed housing. Developers haven't, unfortunately, been blind to that debate.

For years they've been buying up lands in other industrial areas of Toronto for a steal and pressing council for rezonings so they can build more valuable office towers or houses. And, in too many cases, council has simply consented.

Some developers have even bought up lands in the east Bayfront and port area, no doubt hoping for similar rezonings.

Council has done little to discourage that land speculation. For instance, at the same time council

was seriously debating the future of the port and east Bayfront area, Mayor Art Eggleton and some other politicians were touting the old factory lands around Cherry St. as the perfect site for an Olympic Village, if Toronto wins its bid for the 1996 Summer Games.

The idea was also a big hit with Duncan Allan, Peterson's special adviser on Toronto waterfront development. Allan, a blustery man who would win no popularity contests at City Hall, had long been quite vocal in his support for more housing along the easterly waterfront, especially on the provincially-owned LCBO and OPP sites on Queen's Quay.

And Peterson was said to have liked the idea of a Cherry Beach Olympic Village, thinking it would boost Toronto's — and Ontario's — chances of winning the Olympic bid.

But Toronto council didn't like

the idea.

Despite Eggleton's firm opposition, last summer council voted to protect the east Bayfront and port lands for industrial development only.

Council's executive committee later confirmed that decision by rejecting a rezoning request for the so-called CANRON lands at Cherry St. and Lake Shore Blvd. Those derelict industrial lands had been bought up by a development consortium, reputed to include the powerful Marco Muzzo.

City Hall insiders say that council's decision to allow nothing but industry on the valuable east Bayfront and port lands — most of which are owned by the federal-municipal body, the Toronto Harbour Commissioners — incensed Allan and apparently didn't make Peterson too happy either. In fact, Queen's Park is now objecting to council's designation of the lands

at the Ontario Municipal Board, the provincially-run appeal body for municipal decisions.

One has to wonder if Peterson and his government have decided to end run the OMB and set their own agenda for the port lands — not to mention their own LCBO and OPP lands, which would be worth much more on the real estate market if rezoned for housing or offices.

No one's saying that the province shouldn't be involved in waterfront planning. In fact, Toronto council begged Peterson — repeatedly — to help them stop out-of-control Harbourfront development, but he was nowhere to be seen.

Now, he steps in like some kind of white knight to supposedly "save" an area of waterfront that council has moved decisively to protect from development.

It sure makes you wonder.

Oct 19/89

Metro east lakefront development faces veto

BY GENE ALLEN
The Globe and Mail

The Ontario government will exercise a veto over development on Metro Toronto's eastern waterfront for at least a year while it tries to come up with an over-all plan for the land, Premier David Peterson said yesterday.

The veto will not apply to the federally owned Harbourfront lands on the central waterfront, where 16 new buildings are ready to go ahead, or to developments slated for the western lakeshore.

Declaring that Toronto's waterfront must be preserved as a "public resource, not a private resort," Mr. Peterson announced a series of measures involving close co-operation between the province, the federal government and the local municipalities:

- The government has declared a provincial interest in about 460 hectares of land east of Yonge Street and south of Lake Shore Boulevard. That gives the province veto power over any proposed changes in land use.

- David Crombie, head of the federal Royal Commission on the Toronto Waterfront, will carry out an environmental evaluation of lands owned by the Toronto Harbor Commission and the province in the designated area. He is to make recommendations by June 1, 1990, on how the land eventually should be developed.

- Mr. Crombie also will report on waterfront development issues affecting the province in the 110-kilometre stretch of lakefront between Bowmanville and Burlington.

- Steps will be taken to link the waterfront more closely to the rivers that flow into Lake Ontario and to protect their headwaters.

Mr. Peterson told a news conference that the waterfront is "a vital part of our province's heritage. But it is a heritage that, through a prolonged process of ad hoc development, has been slipping away from us, a piece at a time and a building at a time."

He said the measures announced yesterday are intended to guarantee public access to the waterfront and to ensure that it "is linked to the city, instead of separated from it by a great wall of concrete."

The erection of high-rise apartment buildings in Harbourfront has been widely criticized on the ground that they cut off the city from Lake Ontario.

Mr. Peterson said that in the designated lands "not a single



David Peterson, left, and David Crombie at news conference.

structure — not an office tower, a condominium, or even a toolshed — will be constructed without provincial agreement."

The tract extends east from Yonge Street to Ashbridge's Bay, including Cherry Beach and many of the port facilities in Toronto's outer harbor. It does not include the Leslie Street Spit, which is already the subject of a separate environmental assessment.

While it is easy to see "many mistakes of the past," Mr. Peterson said, "we can also see many opportunities ... which must be seized before they are allowed to slip away forever."

John Sweeney, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, said the declaration of provincial interest was limited to the area east of Yonge Street because that was where the provincial and federal governments held the greatest amount of land that was likely to be developed soon.

However, he added that the province and the City of Toronto plan to approach the federal government to ask it to reconsider Harbourfront's plans to go ahead with 16 new buildings on the waterfront west of Yonge Street. "We believe that decision is reviewable, and in fact can be changed," he told reporters.

Ruth Grier, environment critic for the opposition New Demo-

crats, also questioned why the province had not taken steps to curb "massive high-rise development" planned on the waterfront in the western Toronto suburb of Etobicoke. "It's exactly what this announcement is designed to prevent," she told reporters.

She added that she was not sure what kind of environmental evaluation Mr. Crombie would be expected to carry out and said she would be unhappy if it turned out to be a method of getting around the province's stringent Environmental Assessment Act.

Mrs. Grier told the Legislature later that the failure to refer to the act "seems to confirm the province's plan to gut the Environ-

mental Assessment Act as revealed in the leaked document that has become known as Document X." (The document referred to the need to streamline the approval process for land development, specifically by reducing the time spent on environmental assessment.)

The New Democratic MPP said her skepticism was fueled by the government's decision not to require an environmental assessment for a high-rise project on the Etobicoke waterfront by developer Marco Muzzo.

Mr. Peterson described Mrs. Grier's contention as "a crock," and said the Environmental Assessment Act "will apply in every case this is applicable."

Mr. Crombie, a former Toronto mayor and federal cabinet minister, was appointed by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in the spring of 1988 to look into the Toronto waterfront. The provincial assignment runs concurrently with his federal appointment.

In an interim report issued at the end of August, Mr. Crombie recommended that Harbourfront Corp. should be stripped of its role in development and that surplus port land should be taken away from the harbor commission.

He also called for an end to high-rise development on the lakeshore and improved public access. Proceeds from the development of publicly owned land could be used for cleaning up the rivers that flow into the lake.

Yesterday's provincial announcement explicitly endorsed Mr. Crombie's report, and many of its themes were reflected in the remarks of Mr. Peterson and Mr. Sweeney. The Premier said he wants a waterfront where people can "walk or hike or jog with our children along an unimpeded shoreline from Burlington to Bowmanville."

Liberal MPP Ronald Kanter has been given the assignment of finding ways to protect the rivers that flow into Lake Ontario in the Greater Toronto Area.



BERNARD BENNELL/The Globe and Mail